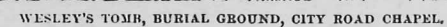


THE HISTORICAL TRAIL 1973



The Historical Trail

**Yearbook of the Historical Society of the
Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of
The Methodist Church**

FOREWORD

We welcome our readers to this eleventh edition of The Historical Trail. You should find these articles interesting and enlightening for the history of southern New Jersey Methodism.

In this issue, Dr. John H. Ness, Jr., Executive Secretary of the Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, presents his address delivered at the First United Methodist Church of Mount Holly on May 12, 1973 at the Conference Historical Society meeting. This article highlights the events in John Wesley's life. Reverend Robert B. Steelman has outlined the historical trip to England in November. The Reverend William Kingston, pastor of the Tuckerton United Methodist Church, continues his article from the last issue about Charles Pitman. A new contributor is Mr. Kenneth N. Scull of Mays Landing. This United Methodist layman is an author, geneologist, historical researcher, and a professional title searcher. Catawba Church that he discusses is one of many that have long since disappeared from the scene. His article is an address delivered at the unveiling of the United Methodist Historic Road Marker on the site of the old Catawba Methodist Church near Mays Landing on the road to Somers Point.

Thanks go to our editor, Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, for compiling this issue and seeing to its publication. He would appreciate receiving any suggestions for future articles or manuscripts for possible publication. He can be addressed at 17 Brainerd Street, Mount Holly, New Jersey 08060.

This is an exciting year for our Historical Society. Our United Methodist Heritage Tour to England will occur in November. Interest and membership in the Society is at an all-time high. Your support and encouragement of our efforts is deeply appreciated. It is my hope that many will be stimulated to learn more about their heritage of faith and that some will be challenged to do the research and writing so that others can learn the history of our great church.

**Robert B. Steelman
President**

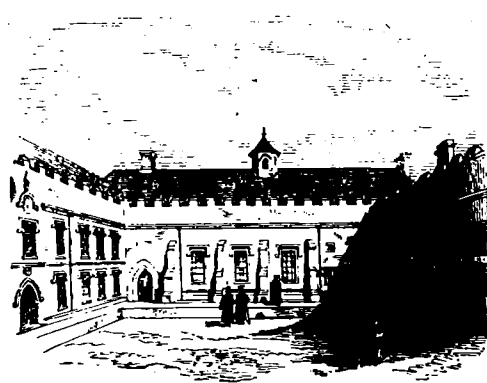
JOHN WESLEY

If Methodism is entitled to use the label "patron saint," it ought to rest upon its founder, John Wesley. Born June 17 (old style) or June 28 (new style), 1703, in Epworth, Lincolnshire, England, he was the second son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. From his father, rector of Epworth and a former Nonconformist, John obtained a strong sense of orthodoxy and love for the Church of England. He also owed his thirst for learning, great courage, and spirit for stern self-discipline from his father. His mother, however, was even a greater influence. The daughter of Samuel Annesley, a Nonconformist minister, she herself educated her children; and although she also subdued their wills, she did not lose their affection in the process. It was from her that John acquired his idealized picture of womanhood, a fact that helped to frustrate his own dreams of family life and a happy marriage.

Perhaps one of the greatest influences upon his life in his childhood was the fire at the rectory at Epworth, February 9, 1709. Although he was trapped on an upper floor and the building was completely consumed by flames, he was rescued at the last moment. Looking back upon this experience, he frequently described himself as a "brand plucked out of the burning."

John spent six years studying at the Charterhouse School in London. Then in 1720 he entered Christ Church, Oxford, from which school he graduated in four years. His parents and a close friend, Sally Kirkhan, daughter of the rector of Stanton, Gloucestershire, encouraged him to take holy orders. During this period he also began to keep a detailed diary that has become his famous *Journal*. It was while reading studies of Jeremy Taylor that John began his practice of regularly searching his own life.

John Wesley was made a deacon September 25, 1725, and six months later was elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. He assisted his father at Epworth, and for two years was quite irregular in his attendance at Lincoln College. He was ordained priest by the Church of England, September 22, 1728.



QUADRANGLE OF LINCOLN COLLEGE.

The rector of Lincoln College recalled John in October, 1729 to fulfill his residential requirements of his fellowship. Upon his return, therefore, he found that his younger brother Charles had gathered several friends into a small study circle. Charles relinquished to his

brother the leadership of this religious study circle, by this time known as METHODISTS. As the group grew in size, it took on numerous other nicknames, the favorite being, "the Holy Club."

The Holy Club soon added social service to its activities of communion and fasting. Its members went into the Oxford prisons where they taught the prisoners to read, wrote letters for them, paid their debts, and tried to find them work. Then they extended their efforts to include the poor people generally to whom they distributed food, clothing, medicines, books, and even conducted a school.

In 1732, William Morgan, a member of the Club, died. His death was probably a result of this social work, therefore, criticism was directed against the group. This criticism, however, produced a group of defendants of the Holy Club, which now was dubbed, "The Oxford Methodists." George Whitefield joined the Club in 1734, but it was soon dissolved by the Wesleys removing themselves in 1735.

Just previous to his father's death, John turned down the offer of the rectorship at Epworth. He argued that he could not produce holiness in others if he had not first achieved it in himself. To acquire this, he felt he needed to stay at Oxford. With his father's death in April, 1735 John took Samuel's Latin work on Job to London to see to its posthumous publication. There he met again his old Oxford friend, John Burton, who had become an influential trustee for the new colony of Georgia in North America. Burton introduced John to Colonel James Oglethorpe, governor of the colony. Together they persuaded John to be a missionary to the Indians as an agent for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and to undertake the spiritual oversight of the Georgian colonists. Hoping that in the process he might save his own soul, John accepted. His brother Charles was ordained in order to accompany John. While on shipboard and during a tempestuous storm at sea, John found in a group of Moravians that spiritual peace for which he had been vainly seeking. This impressed him greatly. Later he would refer to these Moravians with deep appreciation.

On February 6, 1736 John and Charles Wesley landed in America. The mission to the Indians did not prove successful, nor did John succeed in his ministry among the Georgian colonists. He served faithfully, but his stiff, high churchmanship antagonized these persons.

John developed a rather naive attachment to one of his parishoners, Miss Sophy Hopkey. When she married another man, John forbade her communion, which action unwisely courted criticism. Her father, the chief magistrate of Savannah, carried the case to England, for John had fled from the province of Georgia in order to escape imprisonment.

John came to describe his Georgian ministry as "the second rise of Methodism," of which the first was the Holy Club. In Savannah he had organized weekly fellowship meetings which he described as "the first rudiments of the Methodist societies." He had prepared a *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, Charleston, 1737 for these fellowship meetings as well as for the Sunday worship services. The hymnbook included hymns by Isaac Watts as well as translations by John Wesley of various

German hymns. Even in Georgia, Methodism was "born in song."

The most significant result of this Georgian ministry was probably the growing conviction within Wesley that he was seeking his personal salvation and that of others along the wrong lines. Self-denial, good works, and high ritual brought little lasting results. Thus, in December, 1737, fleeing from the persecutions brought on by the Sophy Hopkey affair, he returned to London.

Back in London, John met Peter Bohler, a Moravian, who convinced Wesley that all he needed was simple faith. John turned to Luther's commentary on Galatians that was full of faith. He saw here new truth about justification by faith, an almost forgotten teaching among Anglicans; and it was scriptural. At Wesley's request, Bohler presented a series of witnesses who testified that they had personally been saved by faith alone.

When John's mind was firmly convinced, his heart was not slow to follow. On May 24, 1738 on Aldersgate Street in London, John met with a society composed largely of Moravians who were meeting under the auspices of the Church of England. It was then that his intellectual conviction became immersed in a personal experience as Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* was being read aloud. John wrote in his *Journal*:

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

(*The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*,
edited by John Emory, v. 1, New York, J. Emory
and B. Waugh, 1832, p. 74.

Having been a clergyman for ten years, at the age of thirty-five, John now realized why the "brand had been plucked out of the burning." He saw that his life's work was in the proclamation of the good news of salvation by faith and in recalling the Church of England to its spiritual mission. If that failed, he might have to resort to other means. There were no plans for a new ecclesiastical organization, nor even a desire to form one. He merely had a deep conviction that he had to share these new-found spiritual riches. Soon after this Aldersgate experience, John visited the Moravian community at Herrnhut, Germany, where he learned the details of Moravian organization and had his faith confirmed.

Upon his return to England John preached salvation by faith wherever he could find a pulpit, but church after church closed its doors against his enthusiasm. He met with greater success in establishing his religious societies. These were originally formed to provide orderly devotions under the guidance of an Anglican clergyman, but by this time these groups were mostly being administered by lay stewards for the purpose of religious discussions. John visited these sympathetic

societies introduced "bands," like those of the Moravians and tried to inject new spiritual vigor into them. The "band" consisted of a small group within a society confined to members of the same sex and marital status who were prepared to share personal secrets with one another and receive mutual rebukes. Then in December, 1738 John prepared the *Rules of the Band-Societies*. Through these confessional experiences several of these societies began to show signs of revival.

For a year John used existing organizations, chiefly in London and Bristol, to carry on his work. Some success occurred, but increasing rebellion appeared even in the Fetter Lane Society in London that he had helped to found in May, 1738. George Whitefield then counselled John that evangelization by means of the small group was not enough by itself. If large congregations within the church walls were closed to him, he must reach outside of the church buildings. Whitefield insisted that there were vast multitudes, unchurched, who could be reached only by preaching in the marketplaces, fields, and open spaces. On Sunday, April 1, 1739 John Wesley preached for George Whitefield in the open air at Bristol to a crowd of 3,000 persons. Once he had taken the step to preach in the open, John continued to do so regularly, often with results in changed lives just as remarkable as the results which



THE CHARTER HOUSE SCHOOL.

accompanied Whitefield's preaching. However, unlike Whitefield's dramatic manner, John Wesley spoke quietly and logically. Also unlike Whitefield, John gathered his converts into societies for spiritual growth and continued fellowship.

In December, 1739 a group of persons in London asked Wesley to take them under his care. He obtained the lease of the King's Foundry near Upper Moorfields. This soon became the rallying point for those who were willing to accept his leadership unquestioningly.

In 1739 a New Room built in the Horsefair in Bristol provided a similar center for those followers in that area of England. With the Foundry group and the New Room followers plus the societies that were springing up in a number of other places throughout the country, there was danger that all of this might impose a spiritual autocracy upon John Wesley. Throughout his lifetime, he used dictatorial powers solely for the glory of God and never to the enrichment nor the popularity of John Wesley. In order to oversee his people better, John Wesley divided them into groups or "classes" and appointed spiritual leaders to exercise pastoral care over each person within a class and to conduct weekly fellowship meetings for them.

In 1743, in order to avoid scandal by certain unworthy members, Wesley published his *Rules* for the Methodists classes. These *Rules* listed those evil practices to be avoided, suggested positive forms of social service in which the believer might engage and told how to develop the regular use of the various means of grace. Obedience to the *Rules* was not made a condition for acceptance into the society. That one sole condition was "to be saved from one's sins." The continual breaking of the *Rules*, however, was taken as proof that the person's desire was insincere, and the sinful member was expelled. Tickets of membership were issued four times a year and were required for communion attendance.

John Wesley followed a regular itinerancy for fifty years in order to promote new societies and to preserve high spiritual and moral standards in the various groups. It was customary to spend the four worst winter months in the areas around London and Bristol with some short visits into the immediately surrounding regions, but during the remaining eight months, he was constantly moving, wherever he seemed most to be needed. He seemed to avoid those cities where the Church of England had its cathedral centers and concentrated on the unchurched, industrial regions. During his travelling ministry, John Wesley covered more than 250,000 miles throughout the British Isles and preached more than 40,000 sermons. Most journeys in the earlier years were by horseback. He read as he rode. In his later years he fitted up a travelling study in his carriage, which had been bequeathed to him by an admirer.

John Wesley sought the cooperation of sympathetic clergymen. However, from the outset because of a scarcity of the ordained minister in his fellowship, he was compelled to use gifted laymen. One of the first lay persons was Thomas Maxfield, who joined him in the winter of



A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING.

1740-41. Only with some personal struggle did Wesley finally accede to permit Maxfield to preach from the pulpits of the society. Soon lay itinerant preachers formed the backbone of the Methodist organization.

With 1744 and each year thereafter Wesley invited his ministers to a conference at which time the doctrine and the discipline of the societies were discussed and he assigned the ministers to circuits in which they would itinerate for the coming year. The ablest minister in each circuit was designated as Wesley's assistant or deputy, while the others were his helpers.

To these persons then John Wesley assigned the responsibility for pioneer evangelism and the administration of the Methodist societies scattered throughout the British Isles. In person or by letter he inspired, coordinated, and checked upon their activities.

The major task in the first four annual conferences was the clarifying and summarizing of the basic content of the preachers' messages. Although John Wesley was an orthodox churchman, his own spiritual experience had led him to emphasize the evangelical aspects of the faith, which he believed had been dangerously neglected by the Church of England. He constantly crossed swords with extreme Calvinists who maintained that God had eternally predestined some persons to salvation and others to damnation. Wesley proclaimed the challenge of universal redemption by faith alone, but he also insisted that the Christian believer had and added privilege in the divine assurance that he was saved and he was a child of God as witnessed by the Spirit of

God within. He did urge the necessity for good works as proof of the outworkings of his faith. He constantly called upon his people to press on toward the goal of what he variously called holiness, Christian perfection, sanctification, and perfect love. He was certain that Methodism had been raised up "to spread scriptural holiness over the land." Holiness implied for John Wesley a disciplined conduct, not simply a spiritual experience. His *Rules* insisted that justification, sanctification, and assurance must be proven authentic by good works. From this emphasis the many-sided social service of Methodism has proceeded.



WEST FRONT OF CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE, OXFORD.

The writings of John Wesley also follow this broad concept of doing good to all men: to their bodies and minds as well as their souls. He prepared four hundred publications which went into more than 2,000 editions and included medical, scientific, and educational books, pamphlets, tracts, hymnbooks, and devotional, theological, and Biblical writings. The book *Primitive Physic* may seem quaint reading today, but its plain sense appeared in nearly one hundred editions in as many years. The *Christian Library* series summarized in fifty volumes the most selected pieces of practical divinity in the English language. A monthly magazine was founded in 1778, which continued until a few

years ago as the *Methodist Magazine*, and it was used as a weapon by Wesley in his theological warfare with the Calvinists. The best known of all his writings is his *Journal*, an amazing record of human exertion.

The supreme task of evangelism overshadowed everything else in Wesley's life. This fact combined with a very naive attitude toward women turned his own marriage into a personal, unfortunate tragedy. Some claim that it was a blessing in disguise for his movement.

In 1749 John Wesley and Grace Murray, the housekeeper at his Newcastle headquarters, entered into a solemn engagement. Prior to 1754, the law looked upon such contracts as binding as a marriage ceremony. His brother Charles did not know of the full circumstances. Afraid that Methodism might suffer if John were married, Charles persuaded Grace Murray to marry John Bennet, one of Wesley's preachers. John Wesley was brokenhearted, but he refused to press the matter to a legal conclusion. In the emotional rebound he flew to the arms of a widow with four children, Mrs. Mary Vazeille, whom he married in 1751. She resented bitterly the intimate pastoral oversight that John had with hundreds of young women. Her constant scolding soon effectively removed any danger that domestic life might have offered to his itinerant ministry.

In the 1760's Methodism spread to the United States of America, but the war and the Declaration of Independence forced most of the British preachers to return to their homeland. Only Francis Asbury remained. With the Peace of Paris in 1783, Wesley still felt responsible for Methodism in America. He vainly asked the bishop of London to ordain some of his preachers for service in the United States. Finally, in 1784, he himself acted upon this request by assuming that long-held conviction that ordination by presbyters was valid. He ordained two of his preachers for America. He also made the clergyman, Thomas Coke, a superintendent and instructed him in turn to ordain Asbury to the same office of superintendent. Although John Wesley ordained twenty-seven ministers, his love for the Church of England was so great that only the last three were ordained for British service. All of the others were ordained with the understanding that their ministerial functions ceased with their return to England. Also in 1784, he underlined the fact that his societies were to operate independently of any control from the Church of England. To enforce this, he registered in chancery a deed of declaration which assigned their future government to the Methodist Conference, which was to consist of one hundred ministers named by him. This conference had the power to perpetuate itself.

By this time, late in life, John Wesley was accorded honor throughout the British Isles. Many churches that had formerly been closed to him were now eager to welcome him into their pulpits. At the time of his death in London, March 2, 1791, there were three hundred travelling ministers in the Methodist societies of the British Isles, approximately 72,000 members, and about 500,000 followers. In other

parts of the world there were about two-thirds as many additional members and followers..

John Wesley was not perfect. He made mistakes in judgment and was occasionally tactless with people. He admitted to being a dictator, impatient with incompetence whenever he found it, but he was a benevolent dictator at that. No one could accuse him of living for his own profit, pleasure or prestige. He lived unstintingly for God. He tried hard not to leave the Church of England, even shifting his ground frequently in an effort to hold steadfast to that Church. Eventually he was forced to establish another communion that was able to help people to deeper, spiritual commitment and to assist them in their need.

(Acknowledgement of credit for the content of this paper must be given to Dr. Frank Baker, Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, from whose writings most of this material has been gathered. Dr. Baker is considered to be the world's foremost authority on John Wesley.)

Dr. John H. Ness, Jr.
Executive Secretary
Commission on Archives and History
The United Methodist Church

UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE TOUR OF ENGLAND

John Wesley and John Wesley's England will come alive for the members and the friends of the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society when we embark for England and the land of Methodism's birth, November 5-13, 1973.

Get ready, pack your bags and climb aboard as our DC 8 World Airways Jet prepares to leave Philadelphia's International Airport. We shall fly among the stars and land "bright and early" at Manchester Airport. There we shall board our chartered tour buses, meet our English guides, and quickly be on our way to visit England's cities, see her lovely countryside, and tour the Methodist shrines.

What shall we see in England? First stop will be in Epworth, charming Lincolnshire village that was home for the Wesley family for forty years. Here John and Charles were born. Here their father, Samuel, was rector of the Parish Church. Here Susanna taught her brood not only the three r's, but also the love of God. In Epworth we shall visit the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, the Epworth Rectory that was home to the Wesley family, the 12th century Parish Church. We shall stand by the tomb of Samuel Wesley, see the Epworth Cross where John often preached, and walk the narrow village street so often trod by the Wesley's.

After spending the night in Nottingham in Robin Hood country and visiting the magnificent Lincoln Cathedral, we shall enter the little boyhood home of the one who is the father of American Methodism, Francis Asbury. His home is in West Bromwich near Birmingham. Along the way during our second day in England we shall also visit the Coventry Cathedral and Shakespeare's home at Stratford-on-Avon.

Our third day in England will find us In Oxford, a charming university city. There is much of interest to Methodist tourists to see in

Oxford. Christ Church College was the school where both John and Charles Wesley received their degree. In the Christ Church Cathedral they were ordained. We shall enter John Wesley's room at Lincoln College which he served as Fellow and where he presided over the Holy Club, a forerunner of the Methodist Classes. We shall stop by Jesus College where Dr. Thomas Coke received his education and visit St. Mary the Virgin University Church where



HOME OF ASBURY'S CHILDHOOD.

John Wesley preached perhaps his most famous sermon on "Scriptural Christianity."

Saying goodbye to Oxford and travelling towards Bristol, we shall go by way of Gloucester made famous as the home of George Whitefield, the fiery evangelist of the Great Awakening in the American colonies. Gloucester was also the place where the Sunday School movement was launched by Robert Raikes.

Bristol is important as an early Methodist center. Near here John Wesley "consented to be more vile" and preached out of doors for the first time. Charles Wesley lived in Bristol for several years, and we shall see his home. The New Room in The Horsefair was John Wesley's first chapel. Here Francis Asbury stayed the night before he sailed to America. It is one of the most significant of all Methodist shrines. We shall also visit the grave of Captain Thomas Webb, so important to early Methodism in New Jersey, who spent his last years in Bristol.

Leaving Bristol and heading to London, we shall see the 2,000 year old Bath, Lady Huntington's Chapel, the Salisbury Cathedral, one of England's loveliest, and pre-historic Stonehenge whose ancient stone monoliths were constructed some 2,000 years before the birth of Christ.

We shall have all of Saturday, Sunday, Monday and part of Tuesday to see London. There are many Methodist sites to see: Aldersgate Street; Charterhouse School that John Wesley attended; his home, chapel, and grave; Susanna Wesley's grave in Bunhill Fields and her birthplace are but a few.

In London there will be time for leisure, Sunday worship together, and a banquet for the entire group. To help you get the most from your visit to this remarkable city, several optional tours will be offered. Included will be two half day tours of London, a visit to Windsor Castle, and a night tour of the city including tickets to one of London's famous theaters. There will also be an opportunity for those who so desire to take a trip to Canterbury.

Are you ready to join the United Methodist pilgrimage to England? Better hurry. There are not many places left, and we expect to have a waiting list.

The cost is \$395 and \$25 will reserve a place for you. You can send it to the Tour Treasurer, Mr. Charles W. Shute, 1504 Chestnut Avenue, Haddon Heights, New Jersey 08035. Additional information can be had by writing the Tour Coordinator, Rev. Robert B. Steelman, 134 Methodist Road, Newport, New Jersey 08345.

On to England!

CHARLES PITMAN: NEW JERSEY APOSTLE

PART II. — Presiding Elder

The style of ministry established by Charles Pitman as he served the ten to twenty point circuits of New Jersey stayed with him in his station (single church) charges and on the District.

At the Philadelphia Conference of 1825, Pitman was appointed preacher-in-charge at St. George's Church, Philadelphia. This appointment made him responsible for the supervision of the four churches in the city: St. George's, Ebenezer, Salem and Nazareth. Appointed as his colleagues were Reverend William Barnes and Reverend Joseph Holdich. These were soon joined by Reverend George C. Cookman who arrived from England.

The effectiveness of these four earnest men was shown in the revival of religious concern which swept the churches during their single year of ministry together. Pitman's preaching, in particular, carried with it not only the oratorical style which was much valued at that time, but also close scriptural reasoning that convinced the minds of his hearers and an emotional impact that reached their hearts. What their ears had heard and their minds accepted became welded into their will for commitment and action.

This emotional involvement of both preacher and people is shown in an incident reported by Joseph Holdich to the *Christian Advocate*. At St. George's, Pitman was preaching on Psalm 126:6.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Toward the close of the sermon, the direct application of the words to the preacher and his people so overwhelmed him that he himself began to weep as he knelt in the pulpit unable to continue. Reverend Cookman, caught up in the sense of the immediate importance of decision, leaped into the pulpit beside the kneeling Pitman and shouted, "Harvest home! Harvest home!" Needless to say, the intensity of such an experience brought many to conviction and over a hundred were added to the churches that year.

Many young men were caught up in the seriousness and the enthusiasm of the work. Pitman's concern for them resulted in the formation of a class for guiding them in their first efforts in witnessing and exhorting. From this class sprang many preachers who reached their greatest usefulness in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Such qualities of leadership were soon recognized. At the Conference of 1826, Bishop William McKendree appointed Charles Pitman Presiding Elder of the West Jersey District of the Philadelphia Conference. At this time Pitman had been in the ministry for eight years and was just a little over thirty years old.

The term "Presiding Elder" carried with it many of the administrative responsibilities of a District Superintendent. However, 1826 was a time when many of the far-flung societies and churches of the circuits were led by local preachers and class leaders who were laymen. The ordained men who were appointed to the circuits were able to make the rounds only once or twice a month. Therefore, the Presiding Elder was frequently called upon to perform the duties which could be performed only by an elder.

Pitman, the circuit rider, after having served three station churches, was back on his horse. As Presiding Elder of the West Jersey District, his charge now stretched from the Delaware River to the Atlantic coast and from Cape May to the northerly line of Mercer County with the exception of part of the Trenton circuit north of the city. Nearly all of the area covered by the present Southern New Jersey Conference was under his supervision. At the beginning of Pitman's term of office, men were appointed to Burlington circuit, Trenton and Bloomsburg, Freehold circuit, New Mills circuit, Gloucester circuit, Cumberland circuit, "Bridgetown," Salem station, Salem circuit, Juliastown, Mount Holly and Egg Harbor.

For an example of what a field of labor was indicated by just one of these circuits, we can look at the Burlington circuit with two men appointed. Their schedule for the month was as follows:

- First week — Burlington, Sabbath morning; Cooperstown (Beverly), afternoon; evening, Burlington; Wednesday evening, Black Horse (Columbus);
- Second week — Sabbath morning, Mount Holly; afternoon, Lumberton; evening, Mount Holly; Wednesday evening, Medford; Thursday afternoon, Indian Mills; Thursday evening, New Freedom; Saturday, Blackwoodtown;
- Third week — Sabbath morning, Chew's Landing; afternoon, Greenland; evening, Camden; Tuesday evening, Brother Horne's (a private home southeast of Merchantville); Wednesday evening, Raccoon Creek (Bridgeport);
- Fourth week — Sabbath morning, Asbury (Cinnaminson); afternoon, Moorestown; and "one or two others along the river."

With men such as these working under him, Pitman used every means to reach as many of the people of the circuits as possible with each Quarterly Meeting. Probably the most effective means he developed was the camp meeting at each Quarterly Meeting. These had long been effective west of the Appalachians. Francis Asbury encouraged them wherever he had travelled. Camp Meeting brought together many isolated families for a period of concentrated preaching and worship.

An account of a Quarterly Meeting at the Pleasant Mills Church near Batsto may give a clear idea of the way Pitman combined the administrative and preaching elements of his office. When Quarterly

Meeting time came for the Pleasant Mills circuit, people would begin arriving early on Saturday from such "nearby" places as Mount Holly, Medford, Pemberton, Vincentown, Wrightstown, Bass River (New Gretna), Tuckerton, Greenbank, Lower Bank, Port Republic, Absecon, Weymouth, Martha Furnace, and May's Landing. When all other accommodations were filled, they would camp out in the grove.

Pitman usually began with a Saturday morning service at 10:00 a.m., followed by the Quarterly Meeting immediately after the service. On Saturday evening, there was preaching by preachers from other parts of the circuit. On Sunday morning a love feast was held at 9:00 a.m. This was followed at 10:30 a.m. by the main preaching service. If the assembled people crowded out the church, Jesse Richards, the ironmaster at Batsto, would send over his six mule team wagon, and cover the bed with planks. This platform was then parked between the doors of the church. The women and children were seated in the church with the doors and windows open while the men stood outside to hear. At times, Charles Pitman preached from this improvised pulpit to a congregation of between two and three thousand people. In the intervals between services Pitman used another means to extend the work by selling Bibles, hymnbooks, tracts, and other religious books with which his carriage was always packed.

These Quarterly Meeting services led to the setting up of many of the Camp Meeting Grounds throughout the West Jersey District.

By the Philadelphia Conference of 1830, Charles Pitman had completed the four year term of Presiding Elder on the District. At this conference, Bishop Elijah Hedding appointed Pitman to the East Jersey District. The East Jersey District at that time included most of the area of the present Northern New Jersey Conference extending over the northern boundary of the state to include parts of southern New York State and Staten Island. Part of a third "Asbury District" included Warren and Sussex counties and portions of Pennsylvania. It seems according to a small memorandum book kept by Pitman that Trenton station, Trenton circuit, and Freehold circuit became a part of the East Jersey District in that year. The following were some of the points on Pitman's schedule of appointments for one year: New Brunswick, Bethany, Trenton, Allentown, Whippany, Morristown, Fairfield, Parsippany, Bellville, Newark, Elizabethtown, Rahway, Staten Island, Long Branch, Bordentown, New Germantown, Centreville, Haverstraw, Union Village, Flemington, New Providence, Orange, Hopewell, Denville, Bloomfield, Plainfield, Mount Horeb, Northfield, Frenchtown, Quakertown, Freehold, Keyport, Matteawan and Harmony.

"The appointment of Mr. Pitman to these two districts, which at that time occupied almost the entire state of New Jersey seemed providential. Our young and growing, but often weak and feeble church seemed just then to require the presence of a great master-spirit who could arrest the attention of the masses and then move and mold, and direct them for the glory of God. Mr. Pitman was that master-spirit and

for seven consecutive years as Presiding Elder on these two districts he moved and moulded the entire state of New Jersey Methodistically as no man ever did, and probably no man ever will again."

Rev. E. H. Stokes, D.D., Conference Memorial,
pp. 251, 252
William J. Kingston, Jr.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Our membership in the Historical Society of the Southern New Jersey Conference has increased this year. You or your friends may become a member of the Historical Society by the payment of \$2.00 annual dues. Please send them to our Financial Secretary, Rev. James E. Thompson, 2930 Westfield Avenue, Camden, New Jersey 08105. Also available is the Benjamin Abbott Life Membership of \$50.00. Individuals or churches are invited to become Life Members of the Society.

The Commission on Archives and History is endeavoring to help you preserve the history of your church. A folder is available for special folders and program booklets put out by your church. Please send one or two of these to the Meckler Library, Pennington School, Pennington, New Jersey 08534 that your folder might have materials preserving your church history. If you have not made a listing of the records of your church (membership, baptisms, marriages, minutes of organizations) do so now. Send a copy to Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, 17 Brainerd Street, Mount Holly, New Jersey 08060.

Visit your library room at the Pennington School Library. It is open from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., and 7:30 to 10:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. Arrangements may be made by contacting the librarian to research materials at other times.

Make use of the visual aids in our Conference Office Building. Contact your pastor for a listing of the available sources.

Dr. J. Hillman Coffee,
Librarian-Custodian

CATAWBA CHURCH

We have gathered here today to rededicate and reconsecrate this historic spot in which many of our forefathers and other early pioneers of this area are buried.

The ground on which we are standing was part of a tract of land conveyed by Daniel Davis and Sarah Davis, his wife, to George West by a deed dated September 16, 1816 recorded in Woodbury in Book AA of deeds, page 360.

George West, Jr., was a prominent merchant from Burlington, New Jersey who began acquiring large tracts of acreage in this area between 1811 and 1820. In 1816 when he purchased the site where his Mansion was erected, he was a resident of Burlington. On November 4, 1820 he was a resident of Hamilton Township. This indicates his home was built between 1816 and 1820. Catawba Church appears to have been built also between those years as an old burial plan shows a burial made in this cemetery in 1819.

George West, Jr., was a very religious man and an early convert to the Methodist religion that had been established in this part of the country some 38 years before West settled here. West was a friend of James Sterling (1741-1818). Bishop Asbury's "old friend," Sterling, also lived in Burlington and was a prominent Methodist layman for many years. James Sterling was also a special friend and oftentimes travelling companion of Benjamin Abbott, an early Methodist minister who visited the Mays Landing area in 1778. George West thought so highly of James Sterling that he named one of his sons James Sterling West. It might well have been that through James Sterling's glowing description of the beautiful Great Egg Harbor River and the beautiful stands of virgin timber in this area that George West, Jr., decided to settle here.

There were many families living in this large remote area when West arrived with his family. Forty years or more before, a man named Elijah Barrett was living on Miry Run, about 1,000 feet South of this spot. Elijah Barrett died here between May and June of 1785.

After George West's arrival, he began to build a saw and grist mill on Miry Run and also a small factory which made dye out of sumac berries. He also established wharves along the river to accommodate his Friendship and Independence vessels in which he shipped lumber, grain, fish, vegetables and other products to Philadelphia and other nearby ports. He also established a counting house here which stood near Miry Run. The Mansion house which he built stood along the Egg Harbor River nearly opposite the Catawba Church and it has been said this beautiful home was the finest in New Jersey with the exception of Joseph Bonaparte's home in Bordentown.

One of the first things West would have done after arriving in this area would have been to erect a church for there were many families living near the Great Egg Harbor River between Gravelly Run and Miry

Run. A part of this area was named Thompsonstown in later years. This town and Catawba were contiguous; however, Thompsonstown was the larger of the two towns. Prior to the building of Catawba Church the nearest church was the Free Meeting House which was established sometime after 1778 in Mays Landing. It was used by the Methodists and the Ana-Baptists.

At its height Catawba contained about twenty homes plus the mills and other buildings I have enumerated.

The Catawba Church has been described as resembling an English Chapel with its quaint, high pulpit and its bell tower. The dimensions of the church were about twenty feet in width and slightly less than fifty feet in length. Old eyewitness accounts that survive disclose that on either side of the entrance, stairways led to a large balcony. All the pews had entrance gates, and each was equipped with a kneeling bench. The high pulpit was reached by a narrow set of stairs. The woodwork on the pulpit, window casings, and gallery was heart, white cedar and was hand carved. Behind the pulpit was a sounding board. The gallery in the front of the church held from forty to fifty people.

No records of this church exist prior to the year of 1853, but we do know the church was first served by Methodist circuit riders who made their rounds on horseback in those days. Between these men, the church was served by local preachers and exhorters.

During those years, the church was the center of social and religious activity in this area, and it never had a regular minister. In 1828, it was assigned to the Bargaintown circuit which covered all of what is now Atlantic County and two ministers were appointed to supervise this large area. Among the ministers riding the Bargaintown circuit were Walter Burroughs, James Moore, John Walker, James Ayers, James Walker, Edward Stout, Robert Lutton, William Lummis, N. Chew, J. Henry, L. Loudenslager, Abraham Carhart, David Duffield, Joseph Attwood, John Fort, James White, Levi Herr, B. Andrews, W. C. Nelson, J. H. Barrett, Philip Cline and J. F. Canfield.

In 1852 a new circuit known as the Mays Landing circuit was established and the Catawba Church along with one other church that had been built by Mr. West at the head of Gravelly Run, was made a part of this new circuit. Twenty different ministers served Catawba Church during this time.

With so many churches to serve and so few ministers to serve them in order that regular services could be conducted, the ministers received much assistance from local preachers and exhorters. Among the local men who mounted the high pulpit here at Catawba were:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| • George West | • Denman Bevis |
| • John Brandriff | • Wilson Babcock |
| • Hosea Joslin | • Reuben Babcock |
| • Richard Steelman | • Charles E. P. Mayhew |
| • James Smith | • Theodore Babcock |
| • David Dennis | • James Trusty (Negro man) |

Many famous revival services were held on this spot, but in those days they were known as "protracted meetings." When the revival spirit gripped the community, no doubt inspired by an early Billy Graham type of speaker, it was common for the worshippers to attend services night after night, some coming on foot from Mays Landing and others rowing or sailing across the Great Egg Harbor River from Estellville.

George West's concern and love for the two churches he had established are manifest in his will which was probated in October, 1829. After describing the ground on which we are now standing, his will contains the following:

"to be appropriated and kept for places to worship Almighty God and for a burying ground and although I wish them to be in the care and used by the Methodist Society for that purpose — yet my will is that they shall be free for the preaching of the Gospel by any Minister who firmly believes that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the son of God who shall come to judge the world and further that his life and conduct prove him to be a true friend and missionary of the divine Redeemer."

George West, Jr., spoke these words on May 10, 1828 — one hundred forty-four years ago when he dictated his will.

After Mr. West's death, the property was inherited by his only surviving children, Joseph English West, Charlotte Biddle West, and Maria Inglis West. When the Catawba Plantation was lost in a mortgage foreclosure in 1840, the church and burial ground, being excepted from the mortgage, were not affected by the foreclosure.

The church continued to exist on a more or less regularly organized basis until at least May 3, 1885, for the minutes of the Board of Trustees of this meeting still survive. By this time, however, most of the people in this area had moved away; but in 1895 the Reverend Joseph H. Boyd attempted to hold Sunday afternoon services here. Reverend Boyd was the Pastor of the Methodist Church in Mays Landing at that time.

From 1895 on, the church deteriorated rapidly and ancient pictures which still survive show the steeple had tilted back, the roof had caved in, weatherboards, doors and windows began to disappear and it became a total ruin and was torn down by Anson Crowell of Gravelly Run about 1910.

America in the 1820's and the decades immediately preceding the Civil War was composed of many Catawbas — small, rural communities having their little churches which served the religious and social needs of the villages. Measured by the size of the town — Catawba was relatively unimportant; but if measured by the useful, prominent citizens and their descendants, many of whom attained high rank in both government and industry, the significance of Catawba and its little church that stood upon this spot assume a far greater meaning.

Years ago, this was a well kept cemetery. Graves of the more affluent people were marked with monuments while most of the graves were marked with simple Jersey sandstone markers. I have been informed that while the Somers Point Road was still a narrow, dirt road, many early motorists would become stuck in the sand and would come into this cemetery and break the headstones to put under the wheels of their automobiles. Other people have told me of the rebuilding of the bridge over Miry Run when, it is alleged, many of the sandstone markers and tombstones were used as footings for this bridge.

I personally remember seeing this cemetery in the late 1920's when the bricked-up graves of the West family were still intact although vandals had started to destroy them and had moved the large marble slabs which rested on these crypts. Now, the only grim reminder of this vandalism is the broken section from the tomb of George Spencer West and a small piece of the slab which once covered the grave of Amy West, his mother. These broken stones are not now over the graves of the mother and son as the four graves of the father, mother, and two sons stood side by side immediately to the rear of the church.

Back in the early 1950's an adjoining owner fenced in this property with a split-rail fence and permitted his cattle to graze on this spot even though he did not own it. This land has recently been conveyed to the First United Methodist Church of Mays Landing through the kind cooperation of the heirs of George West, Jr., who are most anxious to see this Cemetery preserved. Once again, the property is united with the Mays Landing Church as it once was on the 1852 circuit.

This is why an interested group of people who call themselves "The Friends of Old Estellville Church" have seen fit to preserve and mark this historic, old spot. This is why we are here today to pay homage to the ground where the West family and other families are buried — for this is Sacred Ground.

Kenneth N. Scull
May 29, 1972